At the meeting of the Committee on 31 October-1 November 1985, in the context of testing and inspection, the United States delegation proposed "the negotiation of an agreement which, subject to certain conditions, would lead to countries accepting each other's test data and maintaining expedited approval procedures". The delegation of the European Economic Community would like to elaborate on the comments which it made on the proposal of the United States delegation at that time.

The Community, while sharing the concern of other parties at the extent to which non-acceptance of foreign test data and extensive approval procedures impede international trade, is not sure that this issue can be resolved on the basis of a single binding international agreement between governments. Without the confidence and full commitment of all the parties concerned, in the private as well as the public sector, such a general agreement may not achieve its desired objective. Rather, the role of the public authorities should be to promote collaboration and mutual recognition between the parties directly concerned, on the basis of well-known and already well-developed international guidelines, and to take full account of agreements concluded between testing laboratories or certification bodies which are in accordance with such guidelines.

This more "voluntarist" but realistic approach could nevertheless involve some greater precision of obligations of parties to the TBT Agreement under Articles 5 and 6 of the Agreement. For instance, parties might undertake the following additional obligations:

- promotion of the active participation of their competent national bodies in the elaboration of general requirements for the acceptance of testing laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies within appropriate international organizations (ISO/IEC, UN/ECE and ILAC);

- encouragement of the conclusion of agreements or arrangements on the mutual recognition of test data or certification between testing, certification or accreditation bodies within their territory and similar bodies in the territories of other parties;
acceptance by central government bodies of test results, certificates or marks of conformity issued by foreign testing, certification or accreditation bodies which have entered into such agreements or arrangements on mutual recognition, provided that the latter are in conformity with recognized international guidelines and standards.

Although this approach may appear more gradual than that proposed by the delegation of the United States, it would, in the Community's view, be more concrete and effective in the long run. The elaboration of obligations under Articles 5 and 6 would in itself provide an opportunity for the behaviour of parties in this area to be more closely monitored than hitherto.

The Community agrees with the United States delegation that this issue will be one of the main ones to be considered in the standards area in the forthcoming round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.